

REMARKS

The present amendment is submitted in response to the Office Action dated October 10, 2006, which set a three-month period for response, making this amendment due by January 10, 2007.

Claims 1-11 are pending in this application.

In the Office Action, the drawings were objected to for various informalities. Claims 1, 2, and 11 were objected to for various informalities. Claims 1-11 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite. Claims 1-11 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over UP 62-74448 to Kitamura.

In the present amendment, claims 1, 2, 3, 5, 10, and 11 were amended to address the noted objections and rejection under Section 112, second paragraph.

In the Office Action, the Examiner rejects the claims as obvious over the reference to Kitamura, arguing that Kitamura shows a first converter (the middle layer of the heat exchanger 24 in communication with the conduit 13) and a second converter (the reforming pipe 9).

The Applicants respectfully submit that Kitamura does not disclose any first converter. The middle layer of the heat exchanger 24 is provided only to raise the temperature of a gaseous mixture consisting of stock gas and steam. There is no indication that a conversion of this gas mixture happens. A conversion of this gaseous mixture takes place in a reforming pipe 9 containing a

packed catalyst bed only. The Applicants submit further that the Examiner must show that the inner heat exchanger layer 24 acts as a converter. Since this is not the case, the claims are not unpatentable under Section 103.

Please note that in the present amendment, claim 1 has been amended to define “a second heating element (9) that is flowed-through by the heating stream for heating the first and second converter” (rather, than “first *or* second converter). The Kitamura reference shows two heating elements, one of them heating the reforming pipe 9, the second for heating layers of the heat exchanger 24 only. Kitamura does not disclose any heating element heating the reforming pipe 9 as well as the layers of the heat exchanger 24. Therefore, amended claim 1 should be allowable on this basis over Kitamura.

For the reasons set forth above, the Applicants respectfully submit that claims 1-11 are patentable over the cited art. The Applicants further request reconsideration of the claims as herein amended.

Should the Examiner have any further comments or suggestions, the undersigned would very much welcome a telephone call in order to discuss appropriate claim language that will place the application into condition for allowance.

Respectfully submitted,

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